

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

FEBRUARY 21, 1826.

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Mr. HENDRICKS, from the Select Committee on Roads and Canals, to whom were referred a Resolution of the Senate, and two Memorials of the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, on the subject of a Canal communication between the navigable waters of the Wabash and those of the Miami of Lake Erie, made the following

REPORT:

That, in the opinion of the Committee, a Canal to connect the Wabash river with the Miami of Lake Erie, is an object worthy the attention, and one which should employ a portion of the means, of the General Government. It is worthy the attention of the Government, whether we consider the great extent of country to which it would afford facilities, and which it would open to an Eastern and a Southern market, or its advantages in a military point of view, for the transportation of troops, military stores, and munitions of war.

This Canal perfected, and the markets of the Eastern cities of the Union are at once opened to the States of Indiana and Illinois; which, at present, have no means within their power, of approaching those markets with the heavy produce of the country. By the aid of this Canal, the markets of Louisiana and Florida are made easy of access, to the Northwestern parts of Ohio, and to the Territory of Michigan, which are at present excluded from the Southern markets. It would be the point of union between the Ocean and the Lakes, from the South, and perfect a chain of inland navigation, from New York to New Orleans, through the great interior of the country.

Of the various routes by which this chain of inland navigation may be completed, this is believed to be the most easy of construction, and on the most direct line. The portage at Fort Wayne, between the St. Mary's and the waters of the Wabash, is less than seven miles; and, although no surveys have as yet been made, by which the elevation of the summit level has been accurately ascertained, yet the fact is certain, that, in wet seasons of the year, the Indians, and other inhabitants of the country, have frequently passed over this summit, in pirogues and canoes. No sufficient data is within the power of the Committee, by which they can state the necessary length of this Canal. That it must necessarily be continued to the Little Wabash, a

distance of twenty-five miles, is the opinion of some, while others suppose the navigable point of the Wabash, proper to be selected for so important a work, will be found lower down, at or near the mouth of Tippecanoe, a distance of about 100 miles. Whatever the distance may be, it will follow, with slight deviations, the valley of the Wabash, and will need, on the whole line, but little lockage.

The Miami of Lake Erie is formed by a junction of the St. Mary's and St. Joseph's, about three miles below Fort Wayne. This stream admits of good navigation a considerable portion of the year, and its value is best known to those who were engaged in military service on the Northwestern frontier during the late war.

The principal work being accomplished, lateral Canals would be more easily effected, and would be very much within the power and the means of the State. These, over short and easy portages, would connect the Wabash with the Western branch of White river, and with other streams to the South; with the rivers which empty into Lake Michigan, and with those which run Westwardly, into the Illinois and the Mississippi.

The route of this Canal is believed to be more direct for an inland navigation through the interior of the country, than the routes through the State of Ohio, or that through Lakes Michigan and Huron. The mouth of the Ohio river, on the South, and the outlet of Lake Erie, on the East, may be assumed as the points through which the inland trade of the country must necessarily pass, to the various markets. Between these points, on the Northern route, through Lakes Michigan and Huron, the distance has been estimated at 1600 miles. The route by the Wabash and the Miami of the Lake, is estimated at something less than 1000 miles; more than 600 nearer than the Michigan route: and it is said to be 150 less than either of the routes through the State of Ohio.

An act of Congress heretofore authorized the State of Indiana to survey and locate this route through the public lands; but, the State being destitute of the means of constructing the Canal, was unwilling to incur the expense of its location, and the act on this subject has remained a dead letter. The State is still unable to proceed with the work, without the aid of the General Government.

The Committee believe that the improvement of the country, in a national point of view, is the great object of this Government; and that this object ought not, on the present occasion, to be abandoned from considerations of a few sections of land, in a district of country in which but little of the public lands have yet been brought into market, and where very few settlements or improvements have yet commenced, to create a value for the public domain. Estimating this work, from its character and position, to be one of national importance, one in which several States are deeply interested, the Committee recommend, in favor of the State, a grant of land of three sections in width, on each side of the Canal.

This aid is not asked in a form which can be burthensome to the Treasury. The land in that quarter of the country, though of com-

paratively little value without the contemplated Canal, would, in the prospect of such improvement, become immensely valuable to the State, and enable her to complete the work. The Committee further believe, and they are strengthened in this belief, by facts of frequent occurrence in new countries, that this donation will operate in favor of the Treasury, and not to its injury; for, a few sections adjoining such grant, the Canal being located, will sell for more than both the sections and the grant, without the prospect of a Canal.

The importance of this Canal, in a military point of view, must be obvious to all; and it is believed that no person who has any recollection of the history of the late war, will ask for argument to prove this assertion. Of the millions expended in that war, how much is it reasonable to suppose was squandered for the want of such improvements—for the want of good roads and Canals? And in no part of the Union were difficulties of this kind more heavily felt, than on the Northwestern frontier. What facilities of communication between the military posts on an extensive border, would thus be afforded! By the aid of this Canal, in time of war, an army could be withdrawn from Upper Canada, and take position on the banks of the Mississippi or the Gulf of Mexico, in less time than a British fleet could ordinarily sail from Quebec to New Orleans. In time of peace, this communication would afford to millions of people a choice of markets, between the East and the South; would enable them to select New York or New Orleans, as the season of the year, or the articles of trade, might render advisable.

Some of the lands through which it is supposed the Canal will pass, are already surveyed and prepared for sale. Some are yet subject to Indian title; but this will, in all probability, be extinguished during the present year. It is desirable that the location be speedily made. This will be necessary, to designate the grant which may be appropriated. Its location will give, instantaneously, great value to the adjacent country; attract the attention of emigrants, and give impulse beyond the power of any other measure, to the settlement of the whole Wabash country. More than three-fourths of the lands within the State of Indiana, yet belong to the United States; and this appropriation of a small portion of the public lands, will but open a new avenue to the purchasers of extensive regions.

The foregoing considerations have induced the Committee to report a bill.

